

## One Way Out of Sloanville

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Category: Alias Smith & Jones

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-06-28 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-06-28 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 21:31:56

Rating: K

Chapters: 1

Words: 798

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: The notorious outlaws are trapped in a small town, and there's only one way out.

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Hannibal Heyes lifted his hand against the mare's chest, and the animal stopped instantly. Its obedience had saved his life more times than he cared to remember. He glanced over at the man lying unconscious on a pile of straw. It's a shame the Kid had to knock that guy over the head, he thought, but what else could they have done? The man had aimed a shotgun at him, and there wasn't any time to argue. Besides, Heyes reasoned, they'd given the man a story to tell his grandchildren. Heyes frowned. That man might live long enough to have grandchildren one day, but right now he wouldn't like to see the odds of his ever having offspring.

Heyes stretched until he could see around the livery, where he and the Kid stood with their backs pressed against the wall. He was just about to lead them out when he recognized three men walking through the festival crowd. He took a deep breath and tried to release some tension- he could think better if he calmed his nerves.

Heyes looked at his partner and grimaced. "Didn't I tell you this was a bad idea?"

"Never mind that now," Curry argued, "How are we going to get out of here?"

Heyes watched as the three men formed a huddle on the other side of

the street, next to the booth where some Carnie guessed your age and weight for a nickel.

"We need some kind of distraction."

"Heyes, we're at a festival- the whole town is full of distractions."

"I mean something out of the ordinary, something unexpected, to draw their attention away from us."

"Such as?"

Heyes hated it when the Kid used that sarcastic tone. He was about to say something clever and sarcastic himself when he felt something grab his leg. A baby monkey- the organ grinder's silent partner- climbed up Heyes' body, sat on his shoulder, and planted a kiss on his right cheek.

Kid laughed. "Ah, Heyes. You do have an affect on women."

Heyes pulled the little monkey off his shoulder and cradled her in one arm. Sometimes, it seemed like God smiled upon them- a comfort to consider that even the Almighty might be on their side.

Hannibal Heyes gave his partner a big grin. "Kid, meet Miss Distraction."

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Tucker Watson and his brother, Deke, already had their share of the \$20,000 spent, on a small ranch and a couple heads of prime cattle. Now all they had to do was capture the two outlaws whom they knew still had to be in town. Homer was in the livery, guarding Curry and Heyes' horses, and the other boys were watching the only road out of Sloneville.

Tucker heard a noise come from the livery. He and Deke exchanged a knowing glance and lifted their guns out of their holsters. The two men stopped short when a little monkey wearing a black hat walked out the livery door. The hat covered the animal's small head. Both men began to laugh, and then they spotted what the monkey was holding in its hands- a Colt 45.

The monkey pushed up its hat with one hand and gave them a wide, toothy grin.

Tucker crouched on the ground and stretched his arms toward the animal. "Here monkey. Give it here, gal. C'mon, darling, Uncle Tuck's not gonna to hurt you."

The monkey stuck out her tongue and pointed the Colt at Tucker. Both men scrambled to their feet and leaped behind a nearby water trough as several gun shots rang out. Mass hysteria broke- women screamed; mothers snatched up their young; and people ran for cover.

Hannibal Heyes and Kid Curry kicked their horses and galloped through the swirling cloud of dirt that had stirred from all the commotion. Kid fired shots both into the air and at a couple men who tried to block their exit out of town.

After the outlaws had ridden hard for several miles, Kid Curry pulled the reins and waited for his partner to join him.

"Heyes, wouldn't you have felt awful if they'd shot that little monkey?"

Heyes squinted at his cousin. "Aw, Kid, I knew she'd be all right. She had more brain cells than they did."

Kid Curry laughed and shook his head. Heyes' genius never failed to amaze him, even after all these years. "Those blanks were left over from our gun fight at Red Rock, right?"

Heyes smiled and his brown eyes twinkled with pride. "Yep" He paused "And that's a story I'll have to tell \_our\_ grandchildren."

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